

Testimony before the Education Committee

RE: Raised Senate Bill #378, *AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS TASK FORCE*

Education Committee, March 7, 2016

Greetings, Representative Fleischmann, Representative Slossberg, and esteemed members of the Education Committee:

My name is Jennifer Parzych and I am a member of the executive board of the Connecticut School Counselor Association (CSCA). As a state association representing over 2500 members including professional school counselors, graduate students, retired school counselors, and related partners, we wish to voice our opposition for Raised SB 378.

It is our understanding that the raised SB 378 recommendations would eliminate the 0.5 credit graduation requirement in health education. The proposed changes do include adding health education as part of elective courses students can choose to include as part of their high school education, but they will no longer be required curricula for every student. We urge you to consider the impact of such a graduation requirement change in educating the whole child. In the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's recent report, they state:

Reviews conducted by CDC and others have shown that effective health education curricula emphasize teaching functional health information; shaping personal values that support healthy behaviors; shaping group norms that value a healthy lifestyle; and developing the essential health skills necessary to adopt, practice, and maintain healthy behaviors. In addition, effective curricula incorporate learning strategies, teaching methods, and materials that are age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate, and culturally inclusive" (CDC, 2015, p.1)

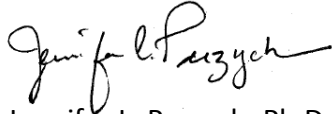
Educating the whole child is essential to their growth and development. In addition to students' academic, college and career readiness development, their social and emotional development is a vital component that cannot be relegated to an elective. Electives are courses selected by some, but not all. Effective health education curriculum includes primary prevention for sexual health, nutrition, healthy and safe schools (including social and emotional climate), substance use prevention, bullying and sexual harassment prevention (CDC, 2015). "When adolescents are confident in their ability to perform behaviors (called self-efficacy) and when they have practice in implementing behaviors, they are more likely to engage in protective behaviors and to refrain from risk behaviors, including sexual risk behaviors" (CDC, 2015, p.48).

An additional concern for the CSCA relates to Section 2, slated in the bill to be effective July 1, 2016. It is our understanding that the High School Graduation Requirements Council has already been formed, and is responsible for making the recommended changes noted above. In the original SB 378, this council was to be established including representatives from several education administrative-related associations. We are dismayed by the lack of representation

by school counselors on such a council, given the vital role school counselors play in the verification, management, and monitoring of each student's progress throughout high school in preparation for post-secondary plans.

For the reasons outlined above, the Connecticut School Counselor Association's Executive Board urges the committee to oppose and reconsider the recommendations of the High School Graduation Requirements Council for the benefit of educating students in Connecticut.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jennifer L. Parzych". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jennifer" and last name "Parzych" clearly legible.

Jennifer L. Parzych, Ph.D.
Counselor Educator, Southern CT State University
Immediate Past President, CSCA
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References:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2015). *Characteristics of health programs among secondary schools*. Retrieved from:

http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/profiles/pdf/2014/2014_profiles_report.pdf